

School inspection report

Date 28 to 30 November 2023

Our Lady of Sion School

Gratwicke Road

Worthing

West Sussex

BN11 4BL

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The governors of the school, together with leaders and managers, ensure that pupils receive a wide-ranging education that is appropriately personalised and enables them to make good progress. Leaders understand their responsibilities and have suitable skills to ensure that pupil wellbeing is at the centre of their decision-making. Governors maintain a well-informed oversight of how leaders review, evaluate and fulfil their responsibilities. Governors support and challenge leaders effectively.
2. Pupils receive effective teaching, which enables pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to make good progress. Teachers are supportive, encouraging and keen to help pupils succeed, which pupils appreciate. Teachers deliver carefully structured lessons that are appropriately resourced, resulting in pupils of all ages, including in the early years, participating well in their learning.
3. Leaders prioritise good mental health and wellbeing, recognising this as being important in enabling pupils to fulfil their potential. Consequently, leaders have put in place effective well-considered programmes and facilities to encourage pupils' health and wellbeing to flourish. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is developmental and informative, and allows for a productive focus on pupils' questions and concerns.
4. Leaders promote consideration, understanding and respect for others, which helps pupils learn to appreciate differences and accept everyone for who they are. As a result, relationships within the school thrive. Pupils are aware of their social responsibilities. They have a strong sense of how they can contribute positively to the school community and beyond.
5. Leaders have implemented careers-related activities for junior pupils and an appropriate careers programme for senior pupils. Nevertheless, while this programme supports sixth-form pupils effectively, it provides less clear information about possible career pathways for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
6. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and have a secure understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. As a result, safeguarding is effective. Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe. They understand how to report concerns and are confident that they will be listened to by school personnel.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

- Leaders should develop the careers guidance for pupils in Years 7 to 11 to support their decision-making more effectively.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders and managers have appropriate knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively across all areas of school life. They have a range of appropriate policies in place which are implemented well. Leaders' clear vision for the school's future development is based on careful self-evaluation. Governors effectively monitor leaders' work through onsite visits and focused committees and provide suitable levels of support and challenge. They check that leaders have the skills and knowledge to ensure that pupils flourish.
8. Leaders demonstrate a comprehensive and effective approach to risk assessment. Regular training, such as a recent day devoted to risk assessment, ensures that staff are well equipped to identify and mitigate risks. Risk assessments are meticulous, thorough and regularly reviewed.
9. Leaders consider carefully how to best serve pupils' needs through the curriculum offered throughout the school. Leaders implement a professional development programme for teachers that successfully supports the planning and delivery of effective lessons so that pupils of all ages and abilities, including those who have SEND, are successful in their learning.
10. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing. The school has recently introduced mental health first aid training for staff that, together with a school counsellor, helps effectively support pupils' wellbeing. Pupils are encouraged to speak out if they have concerns and they are proud to recognise the school as inclusive. Pupils are taught the day-to-day importance of the school's motto, 'Consideration Always' and this is reflected in the respectful behaviour within the school community and modelled by the staff.
11. Parents can contact staff easily and concerns are dealt with swiftly. Complaints are recorded systematically, and in detail. Leaders respond to complaints appropriately within policy timelines. Parents receive regular feedback on their child's progress and are provided with useful academic and pastoral reports. All other required information is made available to parents via the school's website.
12. Leaders show a comprehensive understanding of their duties under the Equalities Act. As a result, reasonable adjustments are made for those pupils who have SEND, and members of the school community do not suffer from discrimination. A suitable accessibility plan is in place.
13. Leaders keenly foster the wellbeing of all children in the early years setting. Identification of risk is thorough, and staff are appropriately trained in all safeguarding matters. Staff regularly self-evaluate their practice and support the school's aims and ethos through their everyday practice. As a result, children are well cared for in an inclusive, stimulating and nurturing environment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 14. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which enables pupils to make links between the different subjects that they are taught. For example, ethics are discussed in biology and some English texts relate to pupils' learning in areas such as citizenship. The curriculum is organised so that pupils develop useful study skills, using technology as appropriate, as they learn to apply their knowledge effectively.
16. Staff identify the needs of, and implement support for, individual pupils well, including those pupils who have SEND. As a result, pupils make good progress, achieving well at each stage of their education, including in the early years. Teachers provide appropriate challenge while expecting active pupil participation. In art, pupils develop their analysis of the work of specific artists, supported by feedback about how to improve the quality of this. Similarly, in mathematics, pupils are challenged to demonstrate understanding of technical vocabulary relating to friction. As a result, pupils throughout the school develop their knowledge and understanding at least in line with their ability, as seen through play scripts that exhibit pupils' understanding of Greek mythology, historical context and writing and computer skills. Almost all pupils attain grades at GCSE and A level in line with or above those expected.
17. Teaching encourages pupils of all ages and abilities to grow in confidence and enjoy their learning. Teachers plan thoroughly, create and utilise effective resources, and deliver engaging lessons, motivating pupils to work hard.
18. The assessment framework enables teachers to have a thorough understanding of pupils' aptitudes and needs, gained through regular appraisal of their progress. Consequently, most teachers draw on effective strategies to meet the needs of pupils of all ages, including those who have SEND and those with higher prior attainment. Across the school, teaching inspires pupils to become effective collaborative learners. From a young age, pupils are encouraged to become self-motivated learners. In the sixth form pupils take responsibility for their own learning in the school's chosen tutorial style of teaching. Younger pupils show initiative and independent learning skills as they work on lesson tasks. Pupils appreciate that a caring community plays an important role in their academic development.
19. Early years staff use careful assessment of children's progress which allows them to design a suitably personalised learning pathway for each child to target their needs and provide individual support if required. The effective use of teaching assistants and teaching that is matched well to individual children's needs contribute to the children's acquisition of new knowledge and skills. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points. They transition successfully into Year 1.
20. There is a varied programme of extra-curricular activities. These include a breadth of opportunities, both teacher and pupil-run, in sports, music, drama and art and clubs and societies, such as chess and cookery. Together with a wide range of events and trips, these activities build understanding and develop skills such as co-operating with and showing consideration for others.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

22. Pastoral arrangements offer both practical and emotional support. For example, Staff utilise spaces such as the 'Known and Nurtured' room to provide individual support for junior pupils. As a result of leaders' clear expectations, staff report any pastoral issues, no matter how minor, so that leaders have clear sight of any emerging concerns. The culture of mutual respect and sensitivity towards others helps pupils feel valued.
23. Staff develop pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence in many ways, such as through judicious use of praise in the classroom and on the sports field. The recognition in assemblies of out of school achievements, kind behaviour, and charitable endeavours supports pupils to grow in self-belief. Opportunities for service created through prefect and school council roles reinforce pupils' understanding that they are valued members of their community.
24. Pupils are enabled to express their views in a variety of ways, including through discussion with their teachers and the senior leadership team or through the 'What Matters' facility on the school's virtual learning platform. Pupils feel confident that they are known and will be listened to.
25. The school has a comprehensive and age-appropriate programme of relationships and sex education. Pupils speak positively about the range and relevance of topics covered. Pupils appreciate teachers' knowledge in these matters. Pupils' questions and concerns are responded to effectively in lessons, tutor time and through assemblies.
26. Leaders ensure that anti-bullying and behaviour policies are clear, appropriately detailed, and adhered to consistently. This results in bullying being rare. When cases arise, they are dealt with swiftly and with care. Leaders and staff promote a culture where pupils feel confident that any concerns they raise will be treated seriously.
27. Staff reinforcement of school rules helps to ensure that behaviour throughout the school is positive, including in the early years where children learn the importance of kindness and respect for others. The school's approach to behavioural issues is proportionate and pupils learn to take responsibility for their actions. A newly launched emphasis on remedies rather than sanctions supports pupils effectively. Pupils respond well to this initiative and approve of its introduction.
28. Arrangements for health and safety, first aid and fire safety meet requirements. Premises and accommodation are suitable and appropriately maintained. The pupils make good use of the facilities for recreation and relaxation.
29. Sporting opportunities in lessons and activities, promote pupils' physical wellbeing and enable them to develop a range of skills. Leaders encourage pupils to join local clubs to further improve their skills and extend their friendships groups.
30. Leaders ensure that pupils feel safe and are properly supervised through the effective deployment of duty staff.
31. The school maintains attendance and admissions registers as required. Staff monitor attendance closely in case further support or liaison with external agencies is required.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

32. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

33. The school places considerable emphasis on mutual respect and educates pupils to appreciate and understand diverse cultures in this country and overseas. This focus is developed through the curriculum and assemblies. Older pupils have the opportunity to experience different world cultures first-hand through trips overseas whilst younger pupils develop their understanding about life in different countries through correspondence with French and Spanish pen pals.
34. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme is carefully planned and reflects the school's inclusive ethos. It enables pupils of all ages to understand the importance of respecting diversity. Pupils show a clear appreciation of the importance of mutual regard and tolerance. Pupils acknowledge that everyone should be accepted for who they are.
35. The school's ethos and culture align closely with fundamental British values such as the rule of law and individual liberty. Pupils are taught right from wrong. They learn to be compassionate and accepting of others.
36. Leaders are committed to programmes which promote the development of skills for life in modern society. The life skills curriculum includes units on laws and institutions and personal finance, for example. Pupils of all ages have many opportunities to understand and experience the concept of democracy through debate and discussion. Younger pupils appreciate the stimulating ethical questions displayed around their building and acknowledge the importance of using their critical thinking faculties. Leaders ensure that children in the early years understand the importance of equality and inclusivity and this is reinforced throughout the school day.
37. The school provides an appropriate careers programme. Younger pupils take part in career-related activities. Pupils in the sixth form are appreciative of the individualised support and advice they receive from the school as they make decisions about post-school pathways. There is a biennial careers fair that provides pupils with the opportunity to explore a range of different options. Pupils receive appropriate careers guidance in Years 7 to 11 through the life skills and PSHE curriculum. However, this guidance, while appropriate overall, does not always ensure that pupils in these year groups are fully aware of the career pathways open to them.
38. Pupils learn about societal and civic roles and become aware of their social responsibilities. Older pupils contribute to the school community, such as through supporting the sports coaching and academic mentoring of younger pupils, whilst younger pupils serve as monitors. In the locality, leaders have built effective links with a care home and pupils of all ages are involved in a programme to support elderly residents. Pupils engage with a variety of social and charitable projects, both in the locality and further afield. Pupils organise successful fundraising events for a range of local, national and international causes.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 39. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

40. Suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place throughout the school. Governors monitor the school's safeguarding policy and procedures effectively and regularly, including through half-termly meetings between the safeguarding governor and safeguarding leaders in school and an annual safeguarding review.
41. All staff and governors receive appropriate safeguarding training on joining the school and this is updated at regular intervals. Safeguarding leaders receive suitable training for their role.
42. Leaders encourage a culture of transparency and an awareness that 'it could happen here'. Any reported safeguarding concerns are recorded thoroughly and acted upon promptly and in line with locally agreed procedures. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, making timely referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police when appropriate.
43. Staff understand child protection procedures, and the different forms that abuse can take, including child-on-child abuse and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Governors check to ensure that the school implements an effective internet filtering and monitoring system. Staff are aware of how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern.
44. Pupils feel safe. They understand that they have a variety of people to whom they can turn to for support. Pupils are confident that adults will take appropriate actions over safeguarding issues.
45. Safer recruitment checks are completed appropriately and properly recorded on a single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 46. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Our Lady of Sion School
Department for Education number	938/6030
Registered charity number	1121398
Address	Our Lady of Sion School Gratwicke Road Worthing West Sussex BN11 4BL
Phone number	01903 204063
Email address	enquiries@sionschool.org.uk
Website	sionschool.org.uk
Proprietor	The Trustees of Our Lady of Sion School, Worthing
Chair	Mrs Katherine Henwood
Headteacher	Mr Steven Jeffery
Age range	3 to 19
Number of pupils	337
Date of previous inspection	16 to 17 October 2019

Information about the school

47. Our Lady of Sion School is a co-educational interdenominational independent day school with a Catholic foundation. The school was founded in 1862 and the senior school, which includes sixth form provision, is situated on its original site in Worthing. The junior school is a short walk away from the senior school. The school is a registered charity and is overseen by a board of governors who, as trustees, are legally responsible for the management and control of both the junior and senior schools.
48. There are currently 12 children in the early years setting, comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
49. The school has identified 77 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
50. No pupil has English as an additional language.
51. The school states its aims are to lead pupils safely towards deeper knowledge of themselves, to understand one another and the world around them, enabling them to move towards a bright future as dependable, just and accomplished young adults.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 November 2023

52. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

53. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

54. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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